



MOTOR M2K Group Breakout Stakeholder Responses

The following is a compilation of participant responses from the group breakout portion of the Aug. 12, 2019 public engagement session. We will use this information as we develop our process and proposed action for MOTOR M2K.

Topic 1: POST-DECISION PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Question: What are some processes or checkpoints we can put in place to ensure public input is considered throughout the life of this project?

MEETING DISCUSSION: One of the issues that emerged was the feeling that there was no actual assurance that site specific plans/implementation post-decision would have public involvement, and that anything agreed upon would lack enforceability—would not have the *teeth* for changing direction if the plan was going wrong. At the beginning of the meeting, Forest Supervisor Jason Kuiken proposed some form of a five-year hard check-in (based on conversations with YSS leadership), where progress was evaluated to see if objectives were being met and that the project was going as planned. He asked the group to help determine what that check-in should look like, if that seemed like a viable option to address concerns. If groups or individuals opposed certain future projects (in specific areas or actions post-decision), there was a sense that they were giving up their opportunity to litigate. There was also a question as to whether groups could sue to halt projects if the Forest Service was not following the NEPA decision. Potential ideas for addressing concerns about the public's lack of ability to meaningfully affect the vegetation treatment program that will be under the MOTOR M2K decision for the next 10-15 years:

- ☐ **Site-specific EAs tiered to programmatic Environmental Analysis**
 - ☐ **Current approach not site-specific enough**
- ☐ **Five-year long project ... potential project phasing ... adaptive management triggers of public involvement ... two-year check in**
- ☐ **Have a Comment period** (similar to the regular NEPA process)
- ☐ Project prioritization ... i.e., **less controversial treatments first** – trust building
- ☐ Post-implementation “scoping” to **adapt future management ideas**
- ☐ Slow down the planning process to allow stakeholders to flesh out ideas, **build trust** and gain buy-in
- ☐ **Distinguish** which actions following the “programmatic” decision are separate decisions/actions under NEPA and subject to judicial review
- ☐ Bring more site-specific details, especially forest-wide LIDAR to **develop more specific treatment** details
- ☐ Five-year hard-stop assessment
- ☐ Opportunity for judicial review



Topic 2: HERBICIDES

Question: Should the use of herbicides be included as a management tool, and if so, under what conditions?

MEETING DISCUSSION: There was a full range of opinions as to whether herbicides should be used or not. There was general agreement at the breakout topic discussion for including herbicides for a range of treatments; however, not all participants felt comfortable or able to participate in the group discussions. Some felt it was very disturbing to be thrust into a setting where there are differences of opinions because the groups have not established relationships and common goals that allow them to have productive discussions and come to agreement.

The following are some of the discussion points:

- No support for herbicides in the condition-based management framework
 - ❖ Caveat willing to **think about very targeted** use on noxious weeds
 - ❖ Manage fuel breaks with fire and not with herbicides
- Possible reforestation **targeted application** instead of broadcast spraying
- **Education** can help inform effects
- Short timeline versus long **timeline** (stand rotation)
- STF **landowners support** herbicide use for reforestation
- **Roadside maintenance** – brush reduction and roadside ditch maintenance
- Support herbicide use for **reforestation**
- **Cost effective**
- Important tool for management of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program with best available science
- **Education**
 - ❖ Case examples of past projects/VSE
 - ❖ FS **weeds** and reforestation
 - ❖ Private inholdings with large scale use/projects
 - ❖ Tuolumne County supports **prudent use** of herbicide
- Fenceline/fuelbreak nexus - use for **fence maintenance**, where overlaps fuel breaks
- Herbicides can diminish the resource; **consider other options** (hand treatments?), particularly for small areas.
- Need to be aware of **culturally sensitive areas** in consideration of herbicides (plant gathering and other sacred sites)
- Create a decision chart with **appropriate solution**
 - ❖ Develop list of chemicals never allowed and allowed under **certain circumstances**.
- Resource Conservation Districts to potentially put together **risk assessments** and appropriate use options by chemical.
- Need a more specific plan.
- **If you want more support, the Forest Service should consider herbicide use less broadly.**



Topic 3: SALVAGE LOGGING

Question: Should salvage logging be considered in this project, and if so, under what conditions? What constraints should be considered when authorizing salvage logging?

MEETING DISCUSSION: There were strong opinions for and against salvage logging throughout the range of options. It was generally noted that it was hard to comment without further definition or specifics. There is a need to further define what salvage logging would entail.

- ★ **Managing fuel loads** for community safety, including prescribed fire and unwanted wildfire
- ★ Rural **economic stability** capture value early and consider work safety. Capture Carbon in products
- ★ Consider **costs** of no action
- ★ After bug kill
- ★ Most of **value lost** in bug killed trees now
 - How to pay for it?
- ★ Salvage logging to clear out roads and provide **road access**

Sideboards

- ★ Snag retention Standards & Guides ... revisit soils for **flexibility**
- ★ **Concern** about a generic design criteria (future and present unknown). Need well defined design criteria
- ★ Hazard removal (infrastructure, roadsides) by road level is **site-specific**; footprint known.
- ★ Salvage logging only to clear the way for **prescribed burning**

Topic 4: ADDITIONAL SIDEBOARDS/MANAGEMENT REQUIREMENTS

Question: What limits (or sideboards) on treatment activities should the Forest Service consider in implementing these landscape scale treatments and why?

MEETING DISCUSSION: In general, there was not much discussion regarding this topic area, although it was addressed to some degree under different topics.

- Keep them simple. Flexibility provides more options, less restrictions.



Topic 5: WILDERNESS/PROPOSED WILDERNESS AND INVENTORIED ROADLESS

Question: Should any actions be taken in designated or proposed wilderness areas or inventoried roadless areas, and if so, what actions and under what circumstances?

MEETING DISCUSSION: Mixed results on whether to include in MOTOR, but most agreed that it was a lower priority for treatment than most other places on the landscape. There was also discussion about other forests (Klamath and Plumas) that had or were working on prescribed fire in wilderness.

- No prescribed fire in **wilderness**
- **Lightening fires** should be main tool for these areas
- Prescribed fire in wilderness could be **considered in certain circumstances**
- **Condition-based management** ... NEPA does NOT equal minimum tool analysis
- Utilize minimum tool analysis similar to some **analysis-based decision making** during lightening fires
- Carson-Iceberg/Emigrant/Mokelumne wildernesses **has had natural fire** and probably does not need prescribed fire
- Not as high a priority as **fire breaks** near communities and infrastructure
- **Fire Regime Intervals** more “out of whack” in other locations – this should not be a priority area for treatment
- **Don’t disturb** IRAs or Wilderness. Don’t add roads to roadless areas (like in new CE rules). Follow current IRA rules.
 - No roads in **roadless areas** – not even temporary roads
- Some support for IRAs in lower elevation where **fire danger** is greater (and more highly departed)
- How do we **control invasive species** in wilderness and IRAs?
- Don’t look for roadblocks for **MOTOR**

Topic 6: CALIFORNIA SPOTTED OWL (CSO) CONSERVATION STRATEGY

Question: Should we implement the newly released CSO Conservation Strategy?

MEETING DISCUSSION: Several participants were unclear how this might work with the Sierra National Forest’s Plan Revision and thought it might be too early to discuss. Others thought that we needed to use all the tools in the toolbox. There is a need to identify what the Sierra’s Revised Forest Plan will include first (or the range of options being considered and how compatible it might be).

Aspects that would require amendment of current Forest Plans include:

- **PAC retirement** (if adaptive, adopt CSO measures, based on trigger point)
- How territories are **mapped** (noted figures shaped like amebae and circle)
- **Flexible DBH** limit up to 40” specific condition Individuals, Clumps & Openings (ICOs) (concern in scale of application; unusual, or widespread?)



- Conditions ... **treat fuels** 1/3 of PAC
 - Revisit DBH limit: 24 – 30"
 - Balance fire risk reduction and long-term concern of competing timelines
 - Short term: Note approach on Sierra NF not settled yet

Topic 7: REFORESTATION

Question: The interdisciplinary team is currently not considering reforestation as part of this decision. Is there a compelling reason reforestation should be considered in this project, and if so, under what conditions and or constraints?

MEETING DISCUSSION: There was general support for reforestation, though less so for tools and sideboards. Though some felt that we should focus on taking care of what we have already planted before including more planting. Discussion points regarding reforestation were as follows:

- ✧ **Reforestation is the first step** in restoring lost forest habitat ... fire and beetle kill
- ✧ **Carbon capture credits**
- ✧ If we had public will and interest in mind, reforestation would aid in **finding funding** to implement (because of carbon sequestration)
- ✧ Interest in including both existing needs and **future fire disturbance** events
- ✧ Restoring **sustainable supply** of timber by controlling brush
- ✧ Provide **more diversity** early seral habitat
- ✧ Cattle use for **controlling competing** vegetation
- ✧ Bioregion first needs a reforestation framework that properly addresses **climate change**, need to restore fire, and establish structural integrity of planted stands
- ✧ Focus on **plantation managements** and not reforestation. Suggestion to plant patches of trees at different times so not all the same size
- ✧ Reforestation is a tool in the **tool box**
- ✧ Major challenge at lower elevation for trees to grow
 - Use data to determine **where to plant** and when
 - Plant after a fire – without reforestation, future of these burn areas is very bleak.
- ✧ Dinkey Collaborative has developed a **reforestation strategy** – suggest utilizing that.
- ✧ Whole Sierra Nevadas need a **bioregional assessment** on how it should be conducted



Topic 8: OTHER TOPICS

Question: What other topics need to be discussed in detail, or assigned a working group to draft the Proposed Action for scoping?

MEETING DISCUSSION: A reoccurring theme was that the timeline is too fast. Some commented that it was unrealistic to build trust with such a short timeline; need to provide details and the timeline is too fast and, the Forest Service is not building a helpful process to collaboration - not supportive of the process and trying to determine whether to participate or if time would be better spent litigating. A differing opinion was that this process the Forest Service was using for public engagement was truly collaborating. The following topics were identified as needing additional discussion:

- Other **processes besides** the current MOTOR M2K concept
- What information is needed to be able to make **informed comments and participation**
- **Road access** for project work – maintain/reconstruction?
- Prioritize PODs by looking at Dinkey Collab. **“MUGS”** (Management Unit Groups)
- Base on desired conditions, identify what those **desired conditions** are – or desired range of variability – more fine-tuned to metrics.
- Fine grained assessment of forest conditions before NEPA conditions are written
 - More specific to area
 - In absence of evidence of these conditions, these actions will not happen (include in NEPA)
- Consider effect to **surrounding communities**
- Demonstration or model of how this treatment will be implemented. Give **visual aid** in support for this project to improve understanding – to show how it could.

